

MAXIMIZING HAPPINESS: MOMENT-TO-MOMENT, GLOBAL,  
AND RETROSPECTIVE INDICATORS OF THE “GOOD LIFE”

by

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Maximizing Happiness: Moment-to-moment, Global,  
and Retrospective Indicators of the “Good Life”

*Folk Concepts of the ‘Good Life’*

A number of recent studies have been devoted to understanding how people define the “good life”. The research typically involves having respondents rate a fictional person’s life that varies on dimensions that have been manipulated by experimenters. King and Napa (1998), for example, asked participants to review a “Career Survey” that had ostensibly been completed by another person. The target’s responses were manipulated to reflect a life of high (vs. low) happiness, high (vs. low) meaning in life, and high (vs. low) income. Participants rated how much they desired the target’s life and how much they thought the target was leading the “good life”. In addition, participants made judgments about the moral goodness of the target. King and Napa (1998) found that meaning and happiness overwhelmingly determined the desirability of a life. Plus, happy people were seen as good people who were likely to go to heaven. Money was virtually irrelevant to college students’ conceptions of the “good life” and of limited importance to community adults who also rated the target’s life.

Using the same paradigm, Twenge and King (2005) examined the contributions of work fulfillment and relationship fulfillment to perceptions of the “good life”. Again, participants examined a survey ostensibly completed by another person about his or her life. The target survey contained questions related to work fulfillment (e.g., “Working at my job is a source of personal meaning in my life.”) and relationship fulfillment (e.g., “Spending time with others is a source of personal meaning in my life.”). Targets responses were manipulated to show either high or low levels of relationship fulfillment and high or low



levels of work fulfillment. Results showed that relationship fulfillment was a central determinant of the “good life”, and was also overwhelmingly rated as morally good. Whereas high work fulfillment appeared to add to high relationship fulfillment, the opposite was not true. The combination of low relationship fulfillment and high work fulfillment was rated nearly as undesirable and poor as a life low in both. Interestingly, these findings map well onto a study (Diener & Seligman, 2002) which found that social relationships were necessary, though not sufficient, for high subjective well-being.

Research has also found that the end of a life holds unique importance when determining its desirability (Diener, Wirtz, & Oishi, 2001). Diener et al. (2001) had participants read short vignettes about a fictitious character named “Jen.” The vignettes showed Jen leading either a very happy or a very depressed life. Each vignette, however, ended with Jen suddenly dying in an automobile accident. Participants rated a happy life as more desirable when it ended abruptly on a high note. A depressing life, on the other hand, was viewed as less bad when mild negative years were added just before the end.

Notably, in all three of these studies, the researchers manipulated the variable of happiness, but they did so in very simplistic ways, often relying on participants’ intuitive knowledge of the meaning of the word. The term happiness, however, has several meanings. Happiness might involve many happy moments (moment-to-moment view), or it might involve an overall assessment of one’s life as being happy (global view). Yet another possibility is that happiness is comprised of happy memories (retrospective view). Previous studies on folk concepts of the “good life” have not distinguished between these possible levels of happiness that are conceptually and empirically distinct. The result has been either an exclusive focus on one type of happiness or an ambiguous confounding of moment-to-

moment and global/retrospective feelings in folk theory research. For example, in the Diener et al. (2001) study, participants made judgments about a fictional target who led a “very happy” or “very depressed” life. In the King and Napa (1998) study, the variable of happiness was manipulated with items that could tap into either moment-to-moment or global happiness such as “At my job, I feel happy most of the time,” “I truly enjoy going to work everyday,” and “My job involves a lot of hassles” (rated low for high happiness condition).

The purpose of the present research was to explore which type of happiness was more important to folk concepts of the “good life”. Is the “good life” defined as an accumulation of many happy moments or an overall evaluation of a satisfying life? Also, are people aware of the role of memory for emotions in their overall well-being?

#### *Conceptual and Empirical Evidence for More than One Form of Happiness*

*Divergence of SWB Measures.* Subjective well-being (SWB) has been defined as a person’s subjective evaluation of his or her life (Diener, 1984). Naturally, such evaluations can occur on many levels. Therefore, when researchers measure a person’s SWB, they usually do so using a variety of methods (Scollon, Diener, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener, 2004). One way to assess SWB is through a cognitive evaluation of one’s life as a whole. Individuals typically complete a survey regarding their overall life satisfaction and fulfillment in important life domains such as work or marriage. Subjective well-being can also be measured by repeated reports of a person’s moment-to-moment emotional reactions (i.e., “experience sampling”). In this approach, researchers typically aggregate numerous moment-to-moment reports made over a set period of time. Finally, in addition to examining current emotions, research has also considered how people remember their past emotions. These retrospective measures of SWB are based on people’s recollections of past emotional

experiences. For example, individuals might recall how they felt during the last week or month.

Even though global, moment-to-moment, and retrospective measures are moderately correlated, there are intriguing discrepancies between them (Scollon, et al., 2004). In particular, people often remember their emotions differently from the way they experienced them (Thomas & Diener, 1990; Feldman Barrett, 1997). Thomas and Diener (1990) found that retrospective reports of one's emotional experiences over time are not extremely accurate. Participants overestimated the intensity of both positive and negative emotions during recall. The overestimation suggests that people think of life and themselves as being more intensely emotional than moment-to-moment experiences indicate.

Research has also shown that people incorporate heuristic information into their memories of emotional experience (Feldman Barrett, 1997). One source of heuristic information is the self-concept, or the general beliefs one holds about the self. Feldman Barrett (1997) found that people's retrospective ratings of emotion were influenced in the direction of their general beliefs about their own emotional lives. People who described themselves as high in neuroticism overestimated the amount of negative emotion they had experienced, while those that described themselves as low in neuroticism underestimated the amount of negative emotion they experienced. Furthermore, cultural differences in retrospective and global reports of SWB have been observed, but these differences do not always emerge in moment-to-moment reports (Oishi, 2001). This discrepancy suggests that additional information, such as cultural norms, become incorporated in retrospective and global reports.

Although moment-to-moment reports and retrospective ratings differ, memories for emotion can be important, in that people may rely on these memories to influence decision making processes. Wirtz, Kruger, Scollon, and Diener (2003) found that moment-to-moment ratings of emotion do not predict decisions. When asked if participants wanted to repeat an experience, memory for emotions was a better predictor for future choice than moment-to-moment reports.

In addition to memory biases that plague global and retrospective reports, life satisfaction judgments also appear susceptible to seemingly irrelevant influences such as the weather (Schwarz & Clore, 1983). For these reasons, researchers such as Kahneman (1999) have argued that only moment-to-moment reports represent “true utility” (p. 20). In contrast, Kim-Prieto, Diener, Tamir, Scollon, and Diener (in press) suggest that no single measure represents “true emotional well-being.” Instead, different measures may be part of the same construct of subjective well-being, but represent different parts on a temporal continuum.

*Philosophical Roots of Happiness.* Research on happiness has revolved around two principle approaches: Hedonism and Eudaimonism. Ryan and Deci (2001) have suggested that these two views are distinct from one another. Hedonism is viewed as many pleasant moments, and the sum of those moments is seen as the essence of the “good life”. This account parallels the moment-to-moment sampling approach to SWB. Hedonistic philosophers have argued that happiness occurs when we satisfy our needs and maximize our pleasure. These needs are not limited to physical satisfaction, but they extend to the attainment of one’s goals or valued outcomes as well.

In contrast, eudaimonia involves the expression of virtue and acting with purpose (Ryan & Deci, 2001). A life high in eudaimonia may not be happy from a moment-to-

moment point of view, but it may exhibit some virtue such as a life with meaning or purpose. Eudaimonic well-being requires realizing one's true potential and living in accordance with one's true self. From the eudaimonic view, activities are not seen as a route to happiness unless there is an intense involvement in, and purpose to, participating in the given activity.

*Empirical Evidence for Two Types of Happiness.* Research has examined the idea that moment-to-moment and eudaimonic happiness are not one in the same, but in fact are separable. Diener and Fujita (2005) compared daily satisfaction over 52 days (similar to moment-to-moment happiness) with overall life satisfaction (similar to eudaimonic happiness). Daily satisfaction and life satisfaction were independent of each other in that each was predicted by different information. Short-term or daily satisfaction was more strongly related to pleasure and pleasant feelings, and global satisfaction was more strongly related to factors such as purpose in life. Daily satisfaction was strongly predicted by interesting and pleasant days, while purpose in life and good memories best predicted life satisfaction. Therefore, it appears that when different types of happiness (i.e. daily happiness or overall life satisfaction) are examined, it is necessary to consider not only different aspects of one's life (Diener et al., 2001), but various time frames, which may be more or less salient for the individual at a given time.

#### *Overview of the Present Research.*

Researchers who assess the SWB of individuals often utilize rich measures of SWB. In particular, SWB researchers have noted that moment-to-moment and retrospective measures capture different aspects of an ongoing process (Kim-Prieto, et al., in press), and have therefore advocated a multimethod approach (Diener, Scollon, & Lucas, 2004). In contrast, research on folk concepts of the "good life" have relied on intuitive notions of

happiness and have not made the distinction between moment-to-moment happiness and global or retrospective happiness.

In two studies, we explored the relative importance of moment-to-moment happiness to global and retrospective happiness in ratings of the “good life”. Does the “good life” consist of many happy moments, happy memories, or as an overall happy judgment? People presumably seek to maximize those aspects that define the “good life”; therefore, understanding folk concepts of the “good life” has important implications for a theory of subjective well-being. Rather than treating folk theories as error-ridden and uninformative, the current research views them as a rich source of meaning, representing the intersection of shared beliefs and individual histories.

### *Predictions*

Following King and Napa (1998), we operationalized “good” in terms of desirability of a life and its moral goodness. For Study 1, we predicted that another’s life that was high in moment-to-moment happiness would be rated as more desirable and morally good than another’s life that was low in moment-to-moment happiness. Similarly, we expected that lives with high recalled happiness would be rated as more desirable and morally good than lives low in recalled happiness. Furthermore, we expected the life that “had it all” (both happy moments and memories) would be rated as most desirable and good. For Study 2, we expected similar effects such that another’s life that was high in global life satisfaction would be rated higher than another’s life that was low in global life satisfaction. Again, we expected the condition of happy moments and high life satisfaction would be rated as the most desirable and morally good.

Of particular interest was the comparisons of lives that had only one happy component (e.g., high moment-to-moment feelings, but low retrospective happiness or low moment-to-moment feelings and high global satisfaction). A comparison of these “disjoint” cells might reveal which independent variable carries the most weight. Our prediction was that moment-to-moment happiness would be more important than recall or global influences.

It was also expected that individual differences would play a role in perceptions of the “good life”. We predicted a person with high life satisfaction would be particularly sensitive to our manipulation of global life satisfaction, while a person with high moment-to-moment affect would be more sensitive to our manipulation of moment-to-moment happiness. Similarly, individuals who recalled many happy memories would be more likely to judge a life high in recalled happiness as the “good life”. We also predicted self-control and delay of gratification would interact with global life satisfaction when determining the desirability and moral goodness of a life, such that a person high in self-control and/or delay of gratification would conclude that having high global life satisfaction is more representative of the “good life” than high moment-to-moment happiness.

### Study 1: Moment-to-moment vs. Recalled Happiness

#### Method

##### *Participants*

Sixty-seven undergraduate psychology students participated for class credit. These students were recruited from an experience sampling study.

##### *Experience Sampling Pre-study*

Study 1 occurred at the end of an experience sampling study. During the experience sampling portion, participants carried handheld computers with them for one week. The

handheld computers alerted participants six times each day at random moments during a 13-hour waking schedule. When signaled, participants rated 14 emotion items for how intensely (if at all) they were feeling the emotion (see Appendix A). We deliberately chose to have individuals participate in the present study after completing an experience sampling study for two reasons. First, we thought the experience sampling portion would increase participants' understanding of the repeated sampling of moment-to-moment emotions. Second, in the experience sampling study we asked participants to recall their emotions from the experience sampling week. We expected that this procedure would make salient to participants the separability of moment-to-moment feelings and recalled emotions.

Three weeks after the experience sampling portion, participants recalled their emotions from the experience sampling week by graphing the degree to which they felt pleasant vs. unpleasant each day throughout the experience sampling week. Appendix B shows a sample participant's graph.

### *Materials and Procedure*

After the recall graphing task, participants were invited to participate in a separate brief study concerning perceptions of other people's emotional well-being. After completing a new informed consent form (Appendix C), participants were asked to view a graph ostensibly belonging to a participant from a previous experience sampling study. The target graph showed on-line emotion "data" from the target's handheld computer (Appendix D-solid line) and the target's "recall" of his/her experience sampling week (see Appendix D-dotted line). Thus, the dotted line represented a task similar to the one the participant had recently completed. We manipulated the target graphs in a 2 (Moment-to-moment: pleasant vs. unpleasant) X 2 (Recall: pleasant vs. unpleasant) design. The solid and dotted lines were



counter balanced so the manipulation of the variables was equal. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: a) on-line pleasant, recall pleasant, b) on-line pleasant, recall unpleasant, c) on-line unpleasant, recall pleasant, or d) on-line unpleasant, recall unpleasant.

### *Dependent Measures*

After studying the target graph for a few moments, participants were asked to answer a few questions about their impressions of the target. As a manipulation check (Appendix E), participants were asked to rate the target's overall life satisfaction and the target's day-to-day moods on a scale from 1 (*Very Poor*) to 10 (*Excellent*). The manipulation checks served to show that the participants accurately recognized the targets as having positive or negative moment-to-moment emotions and positive or negative memory for emotions.

Following King and Napa (1998), the rest of our dependent measures sought to capture the desirability of a life and its moral goodness. Following the manipulation checks, participants rated the target's life on several dimensions. The desirability of a person's life was rated by responding to items such as "How much is this person leading the 'good life'?" and "How much would you like to have this person's life?" (Appendix E). Participants used a scale ranging from 1 (*Not at All*) to 5 (*Extremely Much*). Participants rated the target's moral goodness by responding to "How good is this person?" and "How moral is this person?" using a 1 (*Not at All*) to 5 (*Extremely Much*) scale (Appendix E). The participants also rated "How happy is this person?" on a scale from 1 (*Not at All*) to 5 (*Extremely Much*). Following these five questions, participants rated the quality of the target's life on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 = very poor and 10 = excellent.

Next, participants read and answered the following:

Many religions and philosophies include the idea of a “eternal fate.” If there were such a thing as life after death, circle the number that best represents your guess as to what this person would experience.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
most unpleasant “hell”									most pleasant “heaven”

Previous studies have shown that most respondents are willing to make such a morality judgment. King and Napa (1998) found that only six percent of their 1225 participants left the item blank.

Because religiosity might be expected to influence ratings of moral goodness, we included a 3-item measure of religiosity to be used as a covariate in analyses. These items include “How important is religion in your life?”, “How important is spirituality in your life?”, and “How much do your religious beliefs influence your daily decisions?” (Appendix E). The religiosity items were rated on a scale from 1 (*Not at All*) to 5 (*Extremely Much*). These items were completed prior to the experience sampling portion of the pre-study. Finally, participants rated their perception of the target’s mental health from 1 (*Very Poor*) to 10 (*Excellent*).

### *Individual Differences*

*Life Satisfaction.* Participants in the experience sampling study also completed the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS: Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Appendix F) prior to the experience sampling portion. The SWLS is a 5-item scale used to assess an

individual's overall perception of his/her life satisfaction. Students indicated the extent to which they agreed with a list of five statements (e.g. "In most ways my life is close to ideal") using a 1 (*Disagree Strongly*) to 7 (*Agree Strongly*) scale.

*On-line Affect Balance.* Emotion ratings from the experience sampling study were also aggregated to create an "on-line" or moment-to-moment affect balance score for each participant. When signaled over the experience sampling week, participants rated seven pleasant and seven unpleasant emotions. For each occasion, we subtracted the mean rating of unpleasant emotions from the mean of pleasant emotions to create an affect balance score. The affect balance score aggregated over the entire week served as the measure of moment-to-moment affect balance.

*Recalled Affect Balance.* On the last day of the experience sampling week, participants recalled the percentage of time they experienced each of the specific emotions during the week they carried the handheld computer. Responses could range from 0% to 100% of the time for each emotion. Instructions stated that the percentages did not need to sum to 100% because participants may have felt more than one emotion at a time. We subtracted the recalled unpleasant emotions from the recalled pleasant emotions for this measure.

*Self-Control.* A measure of the participant's level of self-control was taken after completing the dependent measures (Tangrey, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004; Appendix G). The scale consisted of 36 items (e.g. "I am good at resisting temptation.") that asked participants to indicate how much each of the statements reflects how they typically are. Students responded to each statement using a 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Very much*) scale. It was predicted that self-control would interact with recalled happiness when predicting the

desirability and moral goodness of a target's life. However, those participant's that were low in self-control were predicted to be more sensitive to moment-to-moment happiness.

*Delay of Gratification.* The participants completed a delay of gratification questionnaire at the end of the session (Ray & Najman, 2001; Appendix H). Students were asked to answer 12 items (e.g. "Do you like to spend your money as soon as you get it?") signifying how often they performed each of these behaviors using a -3 (*Never*) to 3 (*Always*) scale. As with Self-control, delay of gratification was predicted to interact with recalled happiness when predicting the desirability and moral goodness of a target's life. Those participant's low in delay of gratification were predicted to be more sensitive to the moment-to-moment manipulation.

*Demographics.* Following the self-control scale and the delay of gratification questionnaire, participants answered some questions about themselves. Participants were asked to indicate their gender, religion, and ethnicity as well as their year in school and their age (Appendix I).

## Results

### *Manipulation Checks*

To ensure that participants accurately recognized the target as having positive or negative day-to-day moods and positive or negative overall life satisfaction, a 2 (Moment-to-moment: pleasant vs. unpleasant) X 2 (Recalled: pleasant vs. unpleasant) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was run on the manipulation check questions. Graphs depicting high recalled happiness ( $M = 7.0, sd = 1.69$ ) were rated significantly higher in overall life satisfaction than graphs depicting low recalled happiness ( $M = 3.69, sd = 1.65; F(1, 63) = 76.7, p < .001$ ), suggesting that our manipulation for recall of emotions was effective.

Graphs showing high moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 6.79$ ,  $sd = 1.51$ ) were rated higher in day-to-day moods than low moment-to-moment happiness graphs ( $M = 3.30$ ,  $sd = 1.40$ ;  $F(1, 63) = 107.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This main effect suggests that the manipulation of moment-to-moment happiness worked as well. No interactions emerged from our analyses.

### *Desirability of a Life*

A 2 (Moment-to-moment: pleasant vs. unpleasant) X 2 (Recall: pleasant vs. unpleasant) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was run for each of the desirability measures. Significant main effects emerged for both independent variables on each of the desirability measures. No significant interactions emerged.

Table 1 summarizes the main effects for both independent variables on all desirability measures.

		<b>Dependent Variables</b>						
		<b>Like***</b>	<b>GL***</b>	<b>Quality***</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Moral</b>	<b>EF*</b>	<b>MH***</b>
Recall	High	2.38 (1.30)	3.15 (1.02)	6.65 (1.59)	3.32 (.58)	3.18 (.63)	7.24 (1.56)	6.76 (1.52)
	Low	1.55 (.94)	2.15 (1.15)	4.06 (2.06)	3.10 (.80)	3.12 (.70)	6.43 (1.83)	4.39 (2.20)
		<b>Like**</b>	<b>GL***</b>	<b>Quality***</b>	<b>Good*</b>	<b>Moral*</b>	<b>EF*</b>	<b>MH***</b>
Moment	High	2.47 (1.31)	3.20 (1.07)	6.32 (1.99)	3.38 (.74)	3.32 (.73)	7.31 (1.55)	6.29 (2.17)
	Low	1.45 (.83)	2.09 (1.04)	4.39 (2.08)	3.03 (.64)	2.97 (.53)	6.41 (1.79)	4.88 (2.07)

*Note.* Like = How much would you like to have this person's life?

GL = Is this person leading the "good life"?

Quality = Rate this person's quality of life

Good = How good is this person?

Moral = How moral is this person?

EF = Eternal fate

MH = Rate this person's mental health

*Note.* \* =  $p < .05$

\*\* =  $p < .01$

\*\*\* =  $p < .001$

*How much would you like to have this person's life?*

Main effects were observed for moment-to-moment happiness ( $F(1, 63) = 16.78, p < .001$ ) and recalled happiness ( $F(1, 63) = 11.51, p < .05$ ). Another's life that was high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 2.47, sd = 1.31$ ) was rated as more desirable than another's life that was low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 1.45, sd = .83$ ). Likewise, another's life that was high in recalled happiness ( $M = 2.38, sd = 1.30$ ) was rated as more desirable than another's life that was low in recalled happiness ( $M = 1.55, sd = .94$ ).

*Is this person leading the "good life"?*

Significant main effects emerged for moment-to-moment happiness ( $F(1, 63) = 24.66, p < .001$ ) and recalled happiness ( $F(1, 63) = 19.81, p < .001$ ). A target graph high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 3.20, sd = 1.07$ ) was viewed as more indicative of the "good life" than a target graph low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 2.09, sd = 1.04$ ). Similarly, a target graph high in recalled happiness ( $M = 3.15, sd = 1.02$ ) was viewed as more indicative of the "good life" than a target graph low in recalled happiness ( $M = 2.15, sd = 1.15$ ).

*Quality of life.*

Main effects were found for moment-to-moment happiness ( $F(1, 63) = 27.20, p < .001$ ) and recalled happiness ( $F(1, 63) = 47.93, p < .001$ ). Another's life that was high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 6.32, sd = 1.99$ ) was rated as having a higher quality of life than another's life that was low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 4.39, sd = 2.08$ ). Another's life that was high in recalled happiness ( $M = 6.65, sd = 1.59$ ) was also rated as having a higher quality of life than another's life that was low in recalled happiness ( $M = 4.06, sd = 2.06$ ).

### *Moral Goodness*

A 2 (Momentary: pleasant vs. unpleasant) X 2 (recall: pleasant vs. unpleasant) ANCOVA was applied to each moral goodness measure controlling for religiosity. Only significant main effects were found for momentary happiness for the dependent variables “How good is this person?” ( $F(1, 55) = 5.61, p < .05$ ) and “How moral is this person?” ( $F(1, 55) = 7.71, p < .05$ ).

A target that was high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 3.45, sd = .72$ ) was viewed as a better person than a target that was low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 3.03, sd = .63$ ). Likewise, a target that was high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 3.39, sd = .72$ ) was viewed as being more moral than a target that was low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 2.93, sd = .53$ ). Table 1 shows the main effects for both of these moral goodness measures.

### *Eternal Fate*

Significant main effects were found for moment-to-moment happiness ( $F(1, 60) = 4.84, p < .05$ ) and recalled happiness ( $F(1, 60) = 3.75, p = .05$ ) when determining the eternal fate of another person. A target that was high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 7.31, sd = 1.55$ ) was rated as more likely to go to heaven than a target that was low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 6.41, sd = 1.79$ ). Similarly, a target that has high in recalled happiness ( $M = 7.24, sd = 1.56$ ) was also rated as more likely to go to heaven than a target that was low in recalled happiness ( $M = 6.43, sd = 1.83$ ). Table 1 illustrates these main effects. Controlling for religiosity was not necessary.



### *Mental Health*

#### *How would you rate this person's mental health?*

Significant main effects for moment-to-moment happiness ( $F(1, 63) = 11.86, p < .001$ ) and recalled happiness ( $F(1, 63) = 32.05, p < .001$ ) were found. A target that was high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 6.29, sd = 2.17$ ) was rated higher in mental health than a target that was low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 4.88, sd = 2.07$ ). In the same way, a target that was high in recalled happiness ( $M = 6.76, sd = 1.52$ ) was rated higher in mental health than a target that was low in recalled happiness ( $M = 4.39, sd = 2.20$ ).

#### *Contrast Effects*

A comparison between the high moment-to-moment happiness and low recalled happiness cell and the low moment-to-moment happiness and high recalled happiness cell was made to determine which independent variable had the strongest effect on perceptions of the “good life”. To test which cell was rated higher, a contrast analysis (One-way ANOVA) comparing the means of the high moment-to-moment happiness, low recalled happiness cell versus the low moment-to-moment happiness, high recalled happiness cell was conducted on each dependent variable (Bond, personal communication, 2006). A test of contrasts showed that neither moment-to-moment nor recalled happiness had a stronger effect on conceptions of the “good life”.

#### *Moderators*

To determine whether a participant's scores on several individual difference measures (Satisfaction with Life, Self-Control, Delay of Gratification, Frequency of Positive Affect, and Recalled Positive Affect) interacted with our independent variables, a series of multiple regressions were computed. Dummy variables were created for each of the independent

variables. High moment-to-moment happiness was coded as a 1, while low moment-to-moment happiness was coded as a 0. Similarly, high recalled happiness was coded as a 1, while low recalled happiness was coded as a 0. The individual difference scores were used as continuous variables. The product of two of the above components formed the two-way interactions, and the product of all three components formed the three-way interactions. Main effects were entered into the regression on the first step, all two-way interactions were entered on the second step, and the three-way interaction was entered in the third and last step. These regressions were performed for each of the dependent measures.

#### *Satisfaction with Life*

A significant three-way interaction between satisfaction with life, moment-to-moment happiness, and recalled happiness was found when predicting the desirability of a life,  $\Delta R^2 = .07$ ,  $F(1, 59) = 8.15$ ,  $p < .05$ . A participant who reported having high life satisfaction rated another's life that was high in moment-to-moment happiness and high in recalled happiness as more desirable than another's life that was low in moment-to-moment and recalled happiness. This three-way interaction suggest that participants who are high in life satisfaction were more sensitive to both independent variable manipulations, whereas participants with low life satisfaction made no distinction between high and low moment-to-moment happiness and high and low recalled happiness.

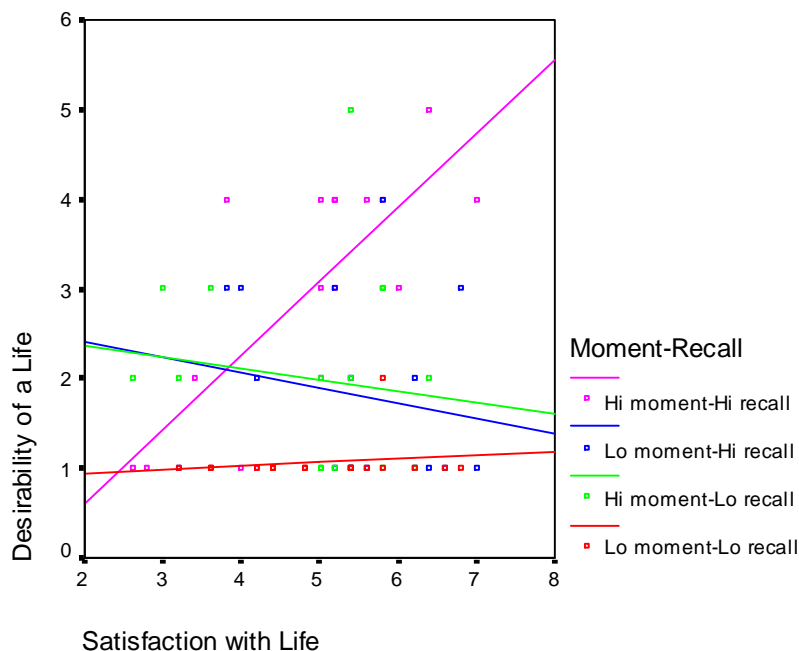


Figure 1. SWLS, Recalled Happiness, Moment-to-moment Happiness, and Desirability.

### *Self-control*

A significant interaction emerged between the participant's report of self-control and a target's level of moment-to-moment happiness when predicting the quality of a person's life,  $\Delta R^2 = .05$ ,  $F(1, 63) = 4.09$ ,  $p < .05$ . A participant high in self-control rated another's life that was low in moment-to-moment happiness and another's life that was high in moment-to-moment happiness as having the same quality of life. However, a participant low in self-control rated another's life that was high in moment-to-moment happiness as having a much higher quality of life than another's life that was low in moment-to-moment happiness (see Figure 2), suggesting that participants high in self-control were not as sensitive to the

moment-to-moment happiness manipulation and do not value moment-to-moment happiness in others as much as participants with low self-control.

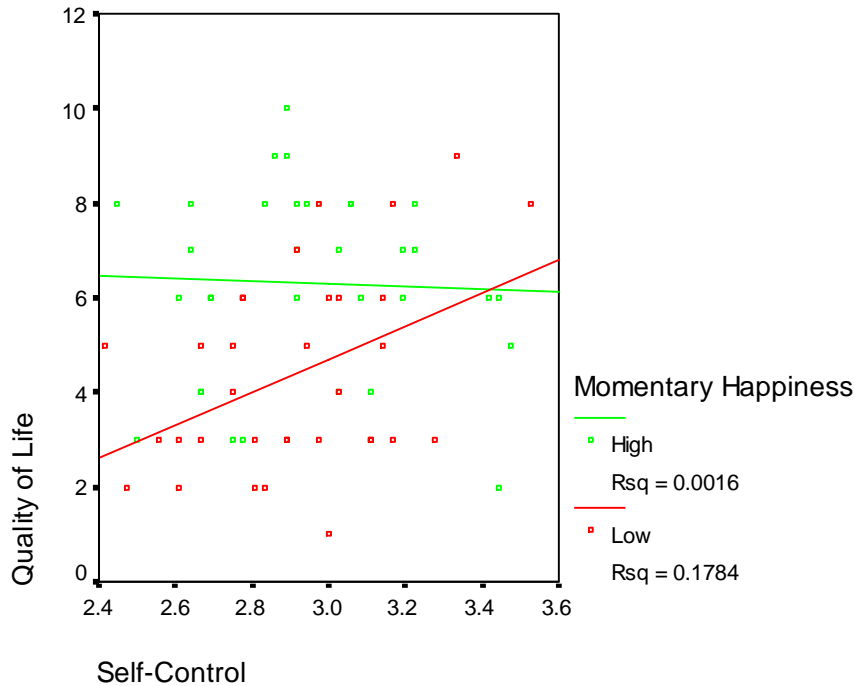


Figure 2. Self-control, Moment-to-moment Happiness, and Quality of life.

### *Delay of Gratification*

Delay of gratification and moment-to-moment happiness interacted to predict all of the moral goodness measures. A participant's delay of gratification score and the target's level of moment-to-moment happiness interacted to predict how good a person is,  $\Delta R^2 = .05$ ,  $F(1, 63) = 3.23, p = .07$ . A participant who reported having high delay of gratification rated a target high in moment-to-moment happiness as being a better person than a target low in moment-to-moment happiness. A participant who reported low delay of gratification rated a target low in moment-to-moment happiness as being a better person than a target high in moment-to-moment happiness.

A participant's delay of gratification score and moment-to-moment happiness also interacted when predicting how moral a person is,  $\Delta R^2 = .08$ ,  $F(1, 63) = 5.99$ ,  $p < .05$ . A participant high in delay of gratification rated a target high in moment-to-moment happiness as significantly more moral than a target low in moment-to-moment happiness.

Finally, a participant's delay of gratification score and a target's level of moment-to-moment happiness interacted when predicting the eternal fate of a person,  $\Delta R^2 = .06$ ,  $F(1, 60) = 4.37$ ,  $p < .05$ . A participant high in delay of gratification rated a target high in moment-to-moment happiness as more likely to go to heaven than a target low in moment-to-moment happiness. On the same note, a participant low in delay of gratification rated a target low in moment-to-moment happiness as more likely to go to heaven than a target high in moment-to-moment happiness. It appears then when a participant is high in delay of gratification, moment-to-moment happiness plays a considerably important role in determining the moral goodness of a person. One possibility is that participants high in delay of gratification took moment-to-moment happiness as a sign of a clear conscience, whereas those low in delay of gratification viewed low moment-to-moment happiness as suffering that would later lead to reward. Since all three graphs for the moral goodness dependent variables were similar, only one graph was included in the results to show the general pattern. Figure 3 depicts the interaction between moment-to-moment happiness and delay of gratification when predicting how good a person is.

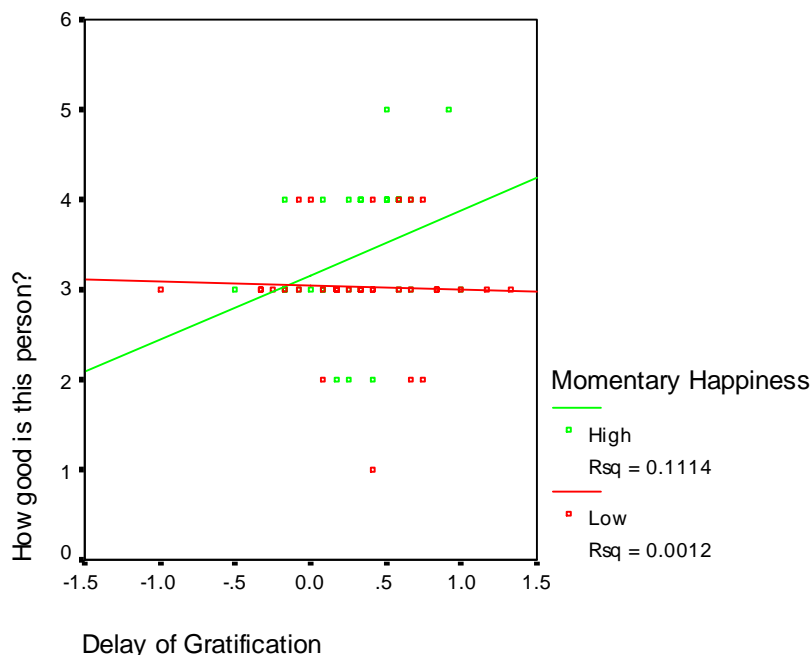


Figure 3. Delay of gratification, Moment-to-moment Happiness, and Goodness of a person.

## Discussion

The results of Study 1 showed that moment-to-moment happiness and recalled happiness were important when determining what makes up the “good life”. Main effects indicated that both independent variables were important when determining the desirability of a life, the moral goodness of a life, another person’s mental health, and another person’s eternal fate. Contrast tests, however, showed that there were no significant differences between moment-to-moment happiness and recalled happiness for any of the dependent variables.

Study 1 also examined how participants’ individual differences interacted with moment-to-moment happiness and recalled happiness when predicting the desirability of a

life and the moral goodness of a life. For participants who had high life satisfaction scores, moment-to-moment happiness and recalled happiness both appeared to be central when determining how desirable another person's life was. People who are satisfied with their life not only seem to think that happy memories are important, but they also feel that the accumulation of many happy moments is important to the "good life".

We had originally predicted that self-control and delay of gratification would interact with moment-to-moment happiness such that individuals high in both self-control and delay of gratification would not be as sensitive to moment-to-moment happiness as individuals who were low in self-control or delay of gratification. We predicted that high self-control and high delay of gratification individuals would prefer lives high in global life satisfaction. Our predictions were supported by findings for self-control. People high in self-control rated a life high in moment-to-moment happiness and a life low in moment-to-moment happiness as having the same quality of life. However, those low in self-control saw a life high in moment-to-moment happiness as having a higher quality of life. This would seem to suggest that moment-to-moment happiness is not as important to people high in self-control. Unfortunately, findings for delay of gratification emerged contrary to our predictions. People who are high in delay of gratification seemed to be more sensitive to the manipulation and relied more on moment-to-moment happiness when rating another person's life.

Delay of gratification interacted with moment-to-moment happiness in ratings of moral goodness. Individuals high in delay of gratification perceive people high in moment-to-moment happiness to exhibit more moral goodness, as compared to those who are low in moment-to-moment happiness. People who are high in delay of gratification might consider a person who is high in moment-to-moment happiness as possessing a clear conscience.

For this first study we were interested in whether moment-to-moment happiness or recalled happiness played a stronger role in determining what makes up the “good life”. The findings from this study seem to suggest that moment-to-moment happiness and recalled happiness are both important to perceptions of the “good life”. To follow this, Study 2 tested whether moment-to-moment happiness or global life satisfaction played a larger role in perceptions of the “good life”.

### Study 2: Moment-to-moment vs. Global Happiness

#### Method

##### *Participants*

One hundred thirty-five undergraduate psychology students participated for class credit. Only those students who did not participate in Study 1 were eligible for this study.

##### *Materials and Procedure*

To start, participants filled out the SWLS and a current mood measure. Participants then read a short set of instructions detailing what they would be doing during the first part of the experiment (Appendix J). Participants were then randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (Global Happiness: high vs. low) x 2 (Moment-to-moment Happiness: high vs. low) design where they received one of four hypothetical vignettes describing the life of “Jen” (Appendix K). Each vignette began with the same demographic information about Jen. Jen was 30 years old, had never been married, and had no children. Aspects of Jen’s life including friends, family, and work were the same for all conditions.

Following the demographic information were two questions used to evaluate Jen’s life as a whole. These two questions, “When I examine my life as a whole, I am pleased with how things have turned out,” and “Overall, I am satisfied with my life.” were manipulated to show



that Jen was either highly satisfied or highly dissatisfied with her life. This manipulation was accomplished by circling a 6 or 7 for the highly satisfied and 2 or 3 for the highly dissatisfied condition (see Appendix K).

Next, students read about Jen's participation in a year long scientific study in which she was required to report how she was feeling several times each day. In the hypothetical study, Jen reported her emotions by marking which smiley face most accurately reflected her current mood several times each day for an entire year (see Appendix K). A version of the faces scale Jen used to report her emotions was shown to participants. Below each face was a letter, A – G, where A fell below the broad smiling face and at the end G fell below the deep frowning face. Under each letter was a number representing the percentage of time Jen supposedly spent in each of the seven states. Below the faces scale was a brief sentence stating which states Jen spent the majority of her time in. To show low moment-to-moment happiness high percentages were given to the frowning faces and the sentence stated that Jen spent most her time in states E, F, and G. To show high moment-to-moment happiness, high percentages were given to the smiling faces and the sentence below stated that Jen spent most of her time in states A, B, and C. After reading the vignettes about Jen, participants answered several questions reflecting how they felt about her.

### *Dependent Measures*

All dependent measures were the same as those used in Study 1 with two exceptions. First, Current Positive Affect was included as an individual differences measure. And second, participants were asked to answer an open-ended question such as, "Why do you think Jen rates her overall life in this way?" (Appendix L).

## Results

### *Manipulation Checks*

To ensure that participants accurately recognized the target as having positive or negative day-to-day moods and positive or negative overall life satisfaction, a 2 (Global: High vs. Low) X 2 (Moment-to-moment: High vs. Low) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was run on both manipulation check questions. Surveys depicting high global life satisfaction ( $M = 6.89$ ,  $sd = 2.31$ ) were rated significantly higher in overall life satisfaction than those with low global life satisfaction ( $M = 3.54$ ,  $sd = 1.58$ ;  $F(1,131) = 155.49$ ,  $p < .05$ ) suggesting that our manipulation of global life satisfaction was effective.

Targets with high moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 7.09$ ,  $sd = 1.65$ ) were rated higher for day-to-day moods than targets with low moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $sd = 1.51$ ). The significant main effect for moment-to-moment happiness ( $F(1,131) = 258.83$ ,  $p < .05$ ) suggests that our manipulation of moment-to-moment happiness also worked.

An interaction between global and moment-to-moment happiness was found for overall life satisfaction ( $F(1,131) = 7.72$ ,  $p < .05$ ), where a target high in global life satisfaction and high in moment-to-moment happiness was rated highest in overall life satisfaction ( $M = 8.48$ ,  $sd = .81$ ) while a life low in global life satisfaction and moment-to-moment happiness was rated the lowest in overall life satisfaction ( $M = 2.85$ ,  $sd = 1.18$ ). It is possible that the effects from one manipulation bled over into the other. In other words, people infer day-to-day moods from global information, and people infer global satisfaction from day-to-day information.

*Desirability of a Life*

A 2 (Global: high vs. low) X 2 (Moment-to-moment: high vs. low) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was applied to each of the desirability measures.

*How much would you like to have this person's life?*

As seen in Table 2, main effects were observed for global life satisfaction ( $F(1,131) = 5.70, p < .05$ ) and moment-to-moment happiness ( $F(1,131) = 5.47, p < .05$ ). Another's life that was high in global life satisfaction ( $M = 1.96, sd = 1.11$ ) was viewed as more desirable than another's life that was low in global life satisfaction ( $M = 1.59, sd = .87$ ). Similarly, another's life that was high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 1.97, sd = 1.12$ ) was rated as more desirable than another's life that was low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 1.6, sd = .87$ ).

The main effects were qualified by a significant two-way interaction of global life satisfaction and moment-to-moment happiness ( $F(1,131) = 7.88, p < .05$ ). Another's life that was high in global life satisfaction and high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 2.42, sd = 1.20$ ) was rated as the most desirable life, while another's life that was low in global life satisfaction and high in moment-to-moment happiness was rated the least desirable life ( $M = 1.55, sd = .86$ ).

Table 2 summarizes the significant main effects and interactions for the dependent variable of “How much would you like to have this person’s life?”

		Global		
		High	Low	
Moment	High	2.42 <sup>a</sup> (1.20)	1.56 <sup>b</sup> (.86)	1.97 (1.12)
	Low	1.57 <sup>b</sup> (.87)	1.64 <sup>b</sup> (.89)	1.60 (.87)
		1.96 (1.11)	1.59 (.87)	

*Note.* Standard deviations are in parentheses. Means with different subscripts differed significantly by Tukey test ( $p < .05$ ).

*Is this person leading the “good life”?*

Table 3 shows that a significant main effect emerged for moment-to-moment happiness ( $F(1,131) = 18.32, p < .05$ ). A target high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 3.12, sd = .96$ ) was viewed as leading the “good life” more so than a target low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 2.46, sd = .97$ ). Interestingly, no main effects emerged for global life satisfaction.

Again the main effect was qualified by a significant two-way interaction for global life satisfaction and moment-to-moment happiness ( $F(1,131) = 14.75, p < .05$ ). Another’s life that was high in global life satisfaction was viewed as most indicative of the “good life” when paired with high moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 3.58, sd = .81$ ). Interestingly, a target’s life was rated as least indicative of the “good life” when the target had high global life satisfaction and low moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 2.29, sd = 1.02$ ); whereas

another's life that was low in global life satisfaction and high in moment-to-moment happiness was rated higher ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $sd = .91$ ). So, it would appear that moment-to-moment happiness plays a significant role in conceptions of the "good life".

Table 3 summarizes the significant main effects and interactions for the dependent variable of "Is this person leading the 'good life'?"

		Global		
		High	Low	
Moment	High	3.58 <sup>a</sup> (.81)	2.71 <sup>b</sup> (.91)	3.12 (.96)
	Low	2.29 <sup>b</sup> (1.02)	2.64 <sup>b</sup> (.89)	2.46 (.97)
		2.88 (1.13)	2.67 (.89)	

*Note.* Standard deviations are in parentheses. Means with different subscripts differed significantly by Tukey test ( $p < .05$ ).

### Quality of life.

Main effects emerged for global life satisfaction ( $F(1,131) = 19.95$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and moment-to-moment happiness ( $F(1,131) = 37.05$ ,  $p < .05$ ) for the dependent variable quality of life. Another's life that was high in global life satisfaction ( $M = 6.29$ ,  $sd = 2.14$ ) was seen as having a significantly higher quality of life than another's life that was low in global life satisfaction ( $M = 5.12$ ,  $sd = 1.78$ ). Likewise, another's life that was high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 6.60$ ,  $sd = 1.84$ ) was viewed as having a significantly higher quality

of life than another's life that was low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 4.89$ ,  $sd = 1.88$ ).

Again, a significant two-way interaction for global life satisfaction and moment-to-moment happiness was found ( $F(1,131) = 11.83$ ,  $p < .05$ ). A target with a life high in global life satisfaction and high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 7.81$ ,  $sd = 1.01$ ) was viewed as having the highest quality of life. But when a target was high in moment-to-moment happiness and low in global life satisfaction ( $M = 5.50$ ,  $sd = 1.75$ ) the target's quality of life rating was higher than a target with high global life satisfaction and low moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 5.03$ ,  $sd = 2.01$ ) suggesting that moment-to-moment happiness plays a strong part in perceptions of quality of life.

Table 4 summarizes the main effects and interactions for the dependent variable quality of life.

		Global		
		High	Low	
Moment	High	7.81 <sup>a</sup> (1.01)	5.50 <sup>b</sup> (1.75)	6.60 (1.84)
	Low	5.03 <sup>b</sup> (2.01)	4.73 <sup>b</sup> (1.75)	4.89 (1.88)
		6.29 (2.14)	5.12 (1.78)	

*Note.* Standard deviations are in parentheses. Means with different subscripts differed significantly by Tukey test ( $p < .05$ ).

### *Moral Goodness*

A 2 (Global: high vs. low) X 2 (Moment-to-moment: high vs. low) ANOVA was applied to each of the moral goodness measures, controlling for religiosity was not necessary. No significant main effects or interactions were found for ratings of “How good is this person?” and “How moral is this person?” Significant effects were only found for the dependent variable of how likely a target is to go to heaven.

#### *Eternal fate*

A main effect was found for global life satisfaction ( $F(1,120) = 5.49, p < .05$ ) on ratings of eternal fate. A target with high global life satisfaction was rated as more likely to go to heaven ( $M=7.56, SD=1.82$ ) than a target with low global life satisfaction ( $M = 6.85, sd = 1.66$ ). Therefore, when deciding the eternal fate of a target, participants rely on that target’s global life satisfaction over moment-to-moment happiness. The effect remains significant when controlling for religiosity using an ANCOVA ( $F(1, 119) = 6.59, p < .05$ ).

### *Mental Health*

#### *How would you rate this person’s mental health?*

Significant main effects for global life satisfaction ( $F(1,131) = 36.22, p < .05$ ) and moment-to-moment happiness ( $F(1,131) = 83.24, p < .05$ ) were found. A target high in global life satisfaction ( $M = 6.59, sd = 2.55$ ) was rated higher in mental health than a target low in global life satisfaction ( $M = 4.81, sd = 2.34$ ). A target high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 7.20, sd = 2.07$ ) was also rated higher in mental health than a target low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 4.31, sd = 2.24$ ).

A significant two-way interaction between global life satisfaction and moment-to-moment happiness was found ( $F(1, 131) = 6.87, p < .05$ ). A target high in global life satisfaction and high moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 8.68, sd = .94$ ) was rated highest in mental health, while a target low in global life satisfaction and low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 3.73, sd = 2.28$ ) was rated the lowest in mental health. However, a target low in global life satisfaction, but high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 5.85, sd = 1.89$ ) was rated higher in mental health than a target high in global life satisfaction and low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 4.84, sd = 2.10$ ). This would suggest that moment-to-moment happiness plays a role in conceptions of mental health.

Table 5 summarizes the main effects and interactions for the dependent variable of mental health.

		Global		
		High	Low	
Moment	High	8.68 <sup>a</sup> (.94)	5.85 <sup>b</sup> (1.89)	7.20 (2.07)
	Low	4.84 <sup>bc</sup> (2.10)	3.73 <sup>c</sup> (2.28)	4.31 (2.24)
		6.59 (2.55)	4.81 (2.34)	

*Note.* Standard deviations are in parentheses. Means with different subscripts differed significantly by Tukey test ( $p < .05$ ).



### *Contrast effects*

A comparison between the high global life satisfaction and low moment-to-moment happiness cell and the low global life satisfaction and high moment-to-moment happiness cell was made to determine which independent variable had the strongest effect on perceptions of the “good life”. To test which cell was rated higher, a contrast analysis comparing the means of the high global life satisfaction, low moment-to-moment happiness cell versus the low global life satisfaction, high moment-to-moment cell was conducted on each dependent variable (Bond, personal communication, 2006).

For the most part, there were no significant differences between the high global life satisfaction, low moment-to-moment happiness and the low global life satisfaction, high moment-to-moment happiness cells. Where there was a “winner”, it turned out to be moment-to-moment happiness. For instance, a life low in global life satisfaction and high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 2.71, sd = .91$ ) was rated as more indicative of the “good life” than a life high in global life satisfaction and low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 2.29, sd = 1.02; F(1,131) = 3.49, p = .06$ ). Also, a life low in global life satisfaction and high in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 5.85, sd = 1.89$ ) was rated higher in mental health than a life high in global life satisfaction and low in moment-to-moment happiness ( $M = 4.84, sd = 2.10; F(1,131) = 5.06, p < .05$ ). Thus, it appears that moment-to-moment happiness played a slightly more significant role in perceptions of the “good life” than global life satisfaction.

### *Moderators*

A series of multiple regressions were computed to determine whether our independent variables interacted with four individual difference measures (Satisfaction with Life, Current Positive Affect, Self-Control, and Delay of Gratification). Dummy variables were created for each of the independent variables. High global life satisfaction was coded as a 1, while low global life satisfaction was coded as a 0. Similarly, high moment-to-moment happiness was coded as a 1, while low moment-to-moment happiness was coded as a 0. The individual difference scores were used as continuous variables. The product of two of the above components formed the two-way interactions and the product of all three components formed the three-way interactions. Main effects were entered into the regression on the first step. All two-way interactions were entered on the second step, and the three-way interaction was entered in the third and last step. These regressions were performed for each of the dependent measures.

#### *Satisfaction with Life*

A participant's report of life satisfaction and the target's level of global life satisfaction interacted to predict the quality of a target's life,  $\Delta R^2 = .04$ ,  $F(1, 131) = 6.30$ ,  $p < .05$ . Figure 4 illustrates this interaction. Participants who reported having high life satisfaction rated targets with high global life as higher in quality of life than targets with low global life satisfaction. In other words, participants high in life satisfaction were more sensitive to the global life satisfaction manipulation when determining the quality of another's life. Participants with low life satisfaction rated targets with low global life satisfaction higher in quality of life than targets with high global life satisfaction.

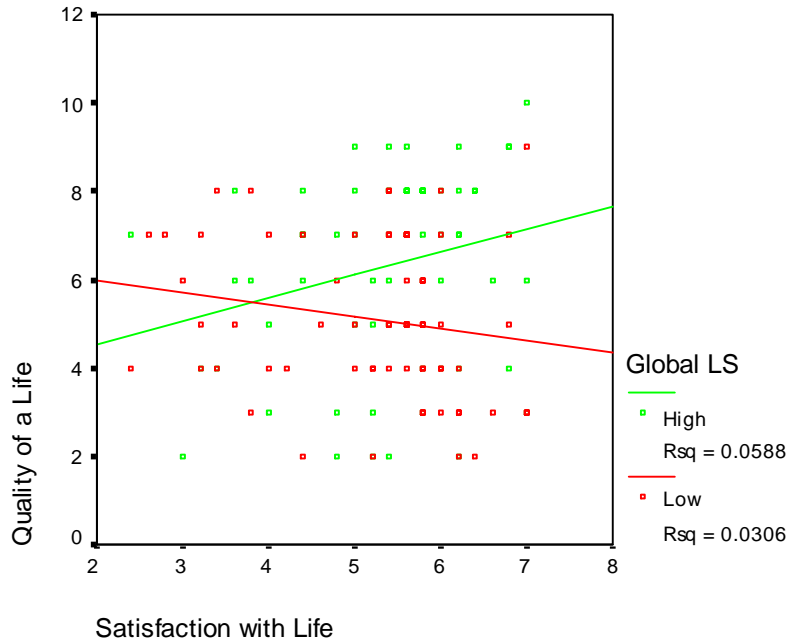


Figure 4. SWLS, Global life satisfaction, and Quality of life.

### *Self-control*

A participant's report of self-control and the target's level of global life satisfaction interacted when predicting the quality of a target's life,  $\Delta R^2 = .03$ ,  $F(1, 131) = 3.67$ ,  $p = .05$ . A participant high in self-control rated another's life that was high in global life satisfaction as having a higher quality of life, while rating another's life that was low in global life satisfaction as having a lower quality of life. A participant low in self-control rated another's life that was low in global life satisfaction as having a higher quality of life, while rating another's life that was high in global life satisfaction as having a lower quality of life (see Figure 5).

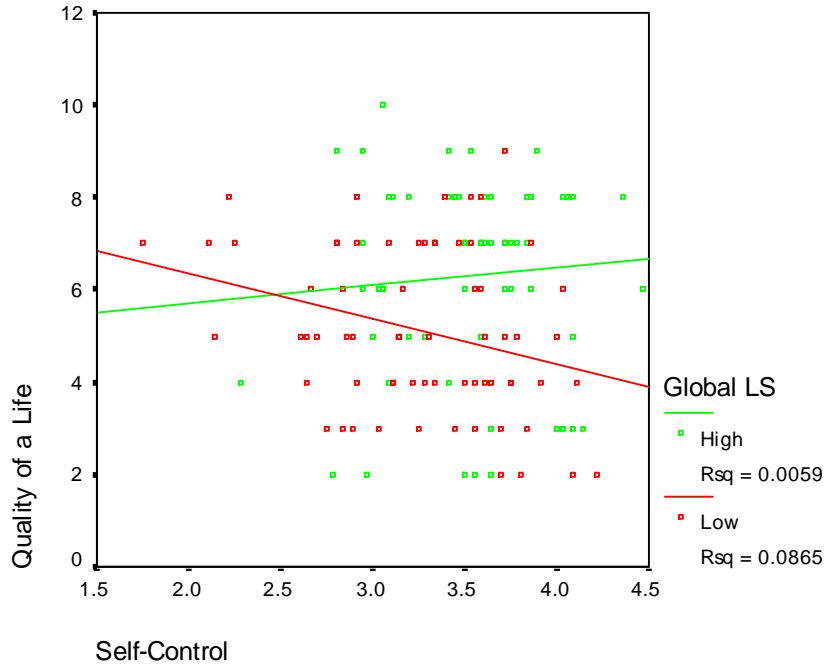


Figure 5. Self-control, Global life satisfaction, and Quality of life.

### *Delay of Gratification*

A significant interaction emerged between participants delay of gratification and the independent variable of moment-to-moment happiness when predicting the desirability of a target's life,  $\Delta R^2 = .04$ ,  $F(1, 130) = 5.54$ ,  $p < .05$ . Participants who had a higher delay of gratification score rated another's life as more desirable when it was high in moment-to-moment happiness, while rating another's life as less desirable when it was low in moment-to-moment happiness (see Figure 6). Although this finding was not predicted, it replicates an interaction found in Study 1. Our original prediction was that delay of gratification would interact with global life satisfaction to predict the desirability of a life.

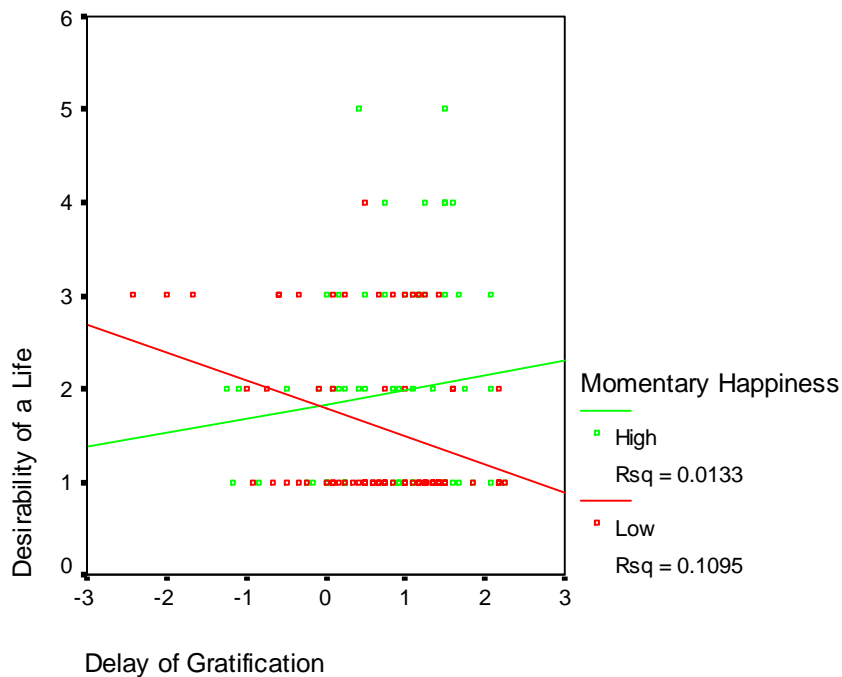


Figure 6. Delay of gratification, Moment-to-moment Happiness, and Desirability of a life.

Two significant three-way interactions occurred between delay of gratification, global life satisfaction, and moment-to-moment happiness. A participant's report on delay of gratification and the target's level of global life satisfaction and moment-to-moment happiness interacted when predicting the quality of a target's life,  $\Delta R^2 = .02$ ,  $F(1, 126) = 3.64$ ,  $p = .05$ . A participant who was high in delay of gratification rated another's life that was high in global life satisfaction and moment-to-moment happiness as having a higher quality of life. Likewise, the low moment-to-moment and low global life satisfaction condition was rated as lowest in quality of life by participants high in delay of gratification. The disjoint cells were rated approximately a 6 on a 10-point scale, in between the life that had it all and the life that had nothing. Interestingly, high delay of gratification subjects did not make much distinction between the high moment-to-moment, low global life satisfaction

and the low moment-to-moment, high global life satisfaction conditions. Participant's low in delay of gratification also gave the highest ratings to the life that had it all (high moment-to-moment, high global life satisfaction), but their second highest ratings went to the life that was low in both moment-to-moment happiness and global life satisfaction. Their lowest ratings went to the disjoint cells, in particular the life that was high in global life satisfaction and moment-to-moment happiness (See Figure 7).

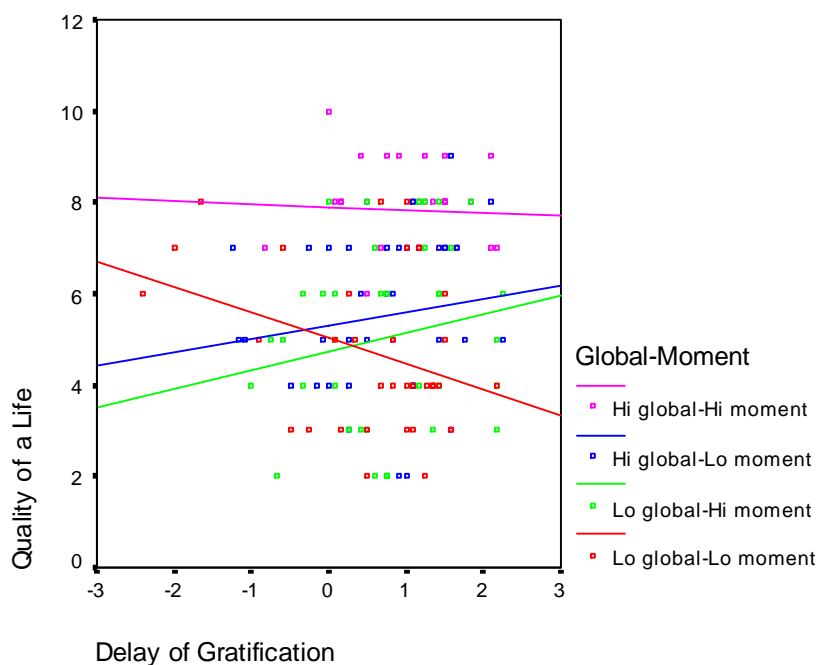


Figure 7. Delay of gratification, Global life satisfaction, Moment-to-moment Happiness, and Quality of life.

A participant's delay of gratification report and the target's level of global life satisfaction and moment-to-moment happiness interacted when predicting perceptions of the

target's morality,  $\Delta R^2 = .04$ ,  $F(1, 125) = 5.39$ ,  $p < .05$ . A participant who reported having a high delay of gratification rated a target as being more moral if that target's life was low in global life satisfaction and high in moment-to-moment happiness. Similarly, a participant who reported having low delay of gratification rated a target high in both types of happiness.

Figure 8 illustrates the three-way interaction.

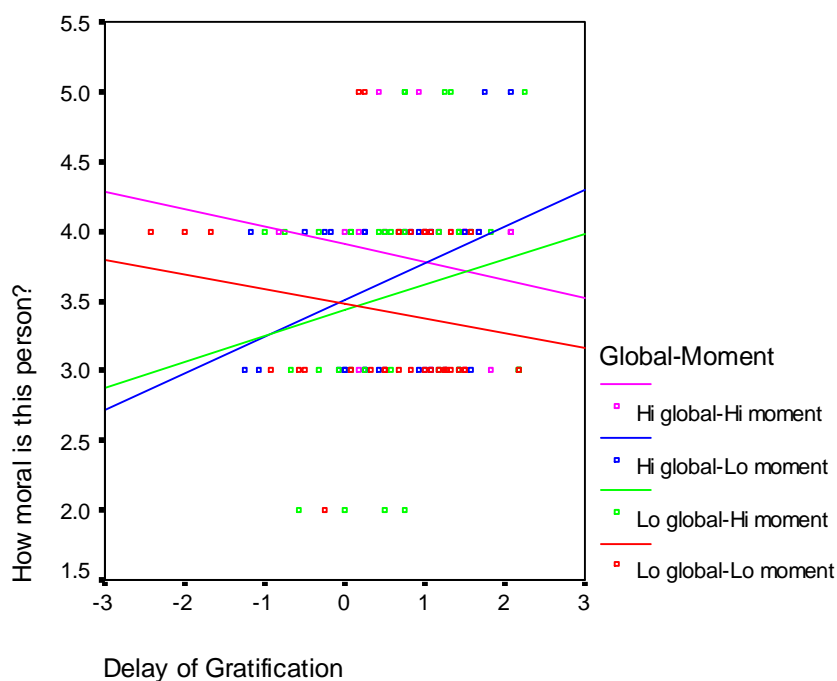


Figure 8. Delay of gratification, Global life satisfaction, Moment-to-moment Happiness, and morality.

## Discussion

The results of Study 2 indicated that both moment-to-moment happiness and global life satisfaction play a significant role in judgments about the “good life”. Main effects showed that moment-to-moment happiness and global life satisfaction were important when

determining the desirability of another's life, the eternal fate of another's life, and another person's mental health. Contrast effects revealed that moment-to-moment happiness may play a somewhat stronger role in determining what makes a life good. Results showed that moment-to-moment happiness seemed to play a significant role in determining the desirability of another's life, but not the moral goodness of that life. When determining a person's eternal fate and a person's mental health, global life satisfaction appeared to be relied upon more than moment-to-moment happiness. Participants preferred and relied on moment-to-moment happiness more than global life satisfaction when rating whether another person was leading the "good life" or when rating another person's mental health. It is possible then, that participants believe the "good life" consists of many happy moments rather than an overall happy judgment.

Participants' individual differences interacted with both of the independent variables. When participants had high satisfaction with life scores, global life satisfaction appeared to be more important when determining the quality of another person's life. Participants high in life satisfaction and self-control indicated that the "good life" consists of overall happy judgments. People high in delay of gratification also indicated that global life satisfaction plays a significant role in determining what makes up the "good life", but people high in delay of gratification also think that moment-to-moment happiness plays a significant role. When deciding how desirable a life is, a person high in delay of gratification seems to rely more on moment-to-moment happiness. But when determining the quality of another's life or how moral another person was, moment-to-moment happiness and global life satisfaction were both important.



## General Discussion

What do people rely on most when determining what makes up the “good life”? Do people rely on moment-to-moment happiness or global/retrospective happiness? Study 1 suggested that moment-to-moment happiness and retrospective happiness were both important in perceptions of the “good life”. Results from Study 2 indicated that while both moment-to-moment happiness and global life satisfaction were important, moment-to-moment happiness was slightly more important when determining what makes up the “good life” and determining another person’s mental health.

SWB researchers often measure SWB using a variety of methods that tap into a person’s moment-to-moment experiences, recalled experiences, and global happiness. How do folk concepts of the “good life” map onto the SWB research? The present studies set out to determine which form of happiness was more important: moment-to-moment, recalled, or global. Our prediction was that moment-to-moment happiness would play a more significant role in conceptions of the “good life”, but our findings indicated that all three forms of happiness were important. It is somewhat reassuring that moment-to-moment happiness was not of overwhelming importance. For the most part, participants desired and valued lives with happy memories and global happiness as much as the life comprised of happy moments.

SWB research has also shown us that people often want to seek happiness (King & Napa, 1998). The same idea rings true for our results. Most participants sought a life that was high in any form of happiness. In other words, the high condition was always rated as much more desirable and good than the low condition, regardless of the independent variable. We also noticed, however, that the life that “had it all” was always rated the best life. One way of interpreting this result is that people want to experience every facet of

happiness. People want to experience many happy moments, but they also want to remember their happiness. Individuals also want to experience an overall satisfying life.

Results also indicated that participants were able to distinguish between the different types of happiness. This finding is compatible with research showing that in fact moment-to-moment happiness and global/retrospective reports of happiness are distinct and separable (Diener & Fujita, 2005). Diener and Fujita (2005) found that the different forms of happiness correlated with different outcomes. For instance, daily satisfaction (similar to moment-to-moment happiness) was related to interesting and pleasant days, while global life satisfaction was strongly related to purpose in life and good memories. For the present studies, it is possible that people may have believed that those high in moment-to-moment happiness were leading more desirable lives because they were experiencing more pleasant and interesting days. Participants may have also inferred from the life high in moment-to-moment happiness a clear conscience. The life of high global life satisfaction may have been seen as a more purpose-driven life, but we did not ask participants in the present study to rate the meaningfulness of the target lives

It also appears that global life satisfaction, moment-to-moment happiness, and retrospective happiness are all important when determining another person's mental health. A life high in any form of happiness is viewed as possessing a high state of mental health which in turn leads others to believe that person is leading the "good life". But it is possible that a person who is happy every moment is viewed as healthier than most.

Furthermore, research on SWB has also shown us that that there are discrepancies between the measures of happiness. This could also affect perceptions of the "good life". While moment-to-moment reports of emotion are important, too much focus on those could

cloud an individual's judgments for the future. For example, research has shown that recalled happy moments are more important than moment-to-moment feelings when predicting whether or not to repeat an experience (Wirtz et al., 2003). Participants might perceive those who remembered more positive emotions as more accurate than those who remembered more negative emotions. Perceived accuracy may be something people value and believe it to be an important component of the "good life". However, SWB research has shown that people are not very accurate in recalling their own emotions (Thomas & Diener, 1990).

From these results, we know that happiness is a strong indicator of how desirable a life is and that life's moral goodness. We also know that evaluations of well-being are subjective and that subjective evaluation could influence how one person rates another person's life. It is possible that what we see in a different life is desirable and considered morally good because it reflects our own life or what we wish for our own life. It may be that the "good life" is not a "one size fits all" notion. The "good life" might be defined according to what will maximize an individual's own life or help them to attain their goals. It is possible that what one sees in another's life as good and desirable is what one needs to satisfy one's own life. For example, those who are low in self-control place more value on moment-to-moment moments. It could be those with little self-control experience many more happy moments and therefore believe that any life high in moment-to-moment happiness is the "good life". On the other hand, individuals high in delay of gratification seem to prefer lives that were high in moment-to-moment happiness. It is possible that high delayers long for the many moment-to-moment moments others seem to experience.

There are a few limitations that need to be addressed. First, the participants in both studies were undergraduate students. It is possible that an older sample of participants would feel differently about global life satisfaction and recalled happiness. Older individuals tend to experience a lower intensity of moment-to-moment affect, so it is possible that moment-to-moment happiness is not as important to them. However, according to the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (Carstensen, 1999), when people realize their time is limited they prioritize emotionally meaningful goals, so perhaps older adults will seek to maximize their moment-to-moment affect.

A second limitation is that these studies were bound by culture. These results are limited to reflect a western mentality. It has been shown that Asians and Asian Americans tend to report lower life satisfaction and SWB in general than European Americans. One explanation for these cultural differences is that Western cultures value personal happiness more than Eastern cultures (Eid & Diener, 2000). An examination of several diverse cultures could reveal interesting differences in the relative importance of moment-to-moment vs. retrospective/global happiness.

A final limitation is that the results are also bound by the religious background of our participants. Almost all of the results would reflect a Christian, specifically Protestant, mentality. Perhaps a broad sampling of religions could produce exciting insights into how people from different religious backgrounds perceive the “good life”.

The present studies sought to expand research on folk concepts of the “good life” by focusing on the experience of happiness. Results suggest that moment-to-moment happiness and global/ retrospective happiness are both important in conceptions of the “good life”. By breaking down happiness and defining it the same way as subjective well-being research, we

were able to observe which type of happiness people rely on and ultimately maximize to obtain this ideal known as the “good life”.

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Wirtz, D., Kruger, J., Scollon, C. N., & Diener, E. (2003). What to do on spring break? The role of predicted, on-line, and remembered experience in future choice. *Psychological Science, 14*, 520-524.



## Appendix A

The following questions will be asked on the Palm pilot computer during the experience sampling week using the below scale. Students will be asked to report their emotions “just before they were signaled.”

Not at all	Very Slightly	Slightly	Moderately	Strongly	Very Strongly	Maximum Intensity
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

- 1) How calm were you feeling?
- 2) How sad were you feeling?
- 3) How anxious were you feeling?
- 4) How happy were you feeling?
- 5) How worried were you feeling?
- 6) How guilty were you feeling?
- 7) How irritated were you feeling?
- 8) How proud were you feeling?
- 9) How joyful were you feeling?
- 10) How sociable were you feeling?
- 11) How excited were you feeling?
- 12) How relaxed were you feeling?
- 13) How bored were you feeling?
- 14) How pleasant were you feeling\*?

(\*Pleasant and unpleasant emotion will be asked on a sliding continuum, where one extreme of the continuum is feeling pleasant and the other extreme is feeling unpleasant.)

## Appendix B.

Below is an example of the variability in emotions one might experience over a day.

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Intensely pleasant			
Moderately pleasant			
Mildly pleasant			
Neutral			
Mildly unpleasant			
Moderately unpleasant			
Intensely unpleasant			

Appendix C  
STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I, the undersigned, do hereby give my informed consent to my participation in the Cinderella Study. I have been informed about each of the following:

- The purposes of the study- the research is intended to examine the subjects' emotions and memory.
- The procedures – I will be completing several questionnaires that will ask about my feelings and attitudes I may have.
- The benefits – Participants will experience the research process, and receive one hour of research credit for their participation.
- The risks- none
- I may only receive credit for participating in the present study once.

I understand that I may withdraw at any time before or during the experiment at my option, if I become upset or begin feel uncomfortable. Recognizing the importance of avoiding bias in the results of this experiment, I agree not to discuss any of the details of the procedure with other participants. I understand that all of the research and evaluation materials will be confidentially maintained. The means used to maintain confidentiality are:

- My data will be given a code number for research identification, and my name will be kept anonymous.
- Data, along with consent forms, will be kept in a locked file cabinet.
- Only the investigators will have access to my identification data.

I understand that if I have questions concerning the research, I can call the following persons:

Amanda Caldwell- Graduate Student

-Department of Psychology, 257-7414

Dr Christie Scollon- Faculty Sponsor

-Department of Psychology, 257-7410

Dr. Don Dansereau-Chair, Department of Psychology Human Subjects Committee

-257-7410

Dr. Timothy Hubbard -TCU Committee on Safeguards of Human Subjects – Psychology

-257-6412

Jan Fox, TCU Coordinator-Research and Sponsored Projects

-257-7515

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Name (PLEASE PRINT)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's TCU Student ID#

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

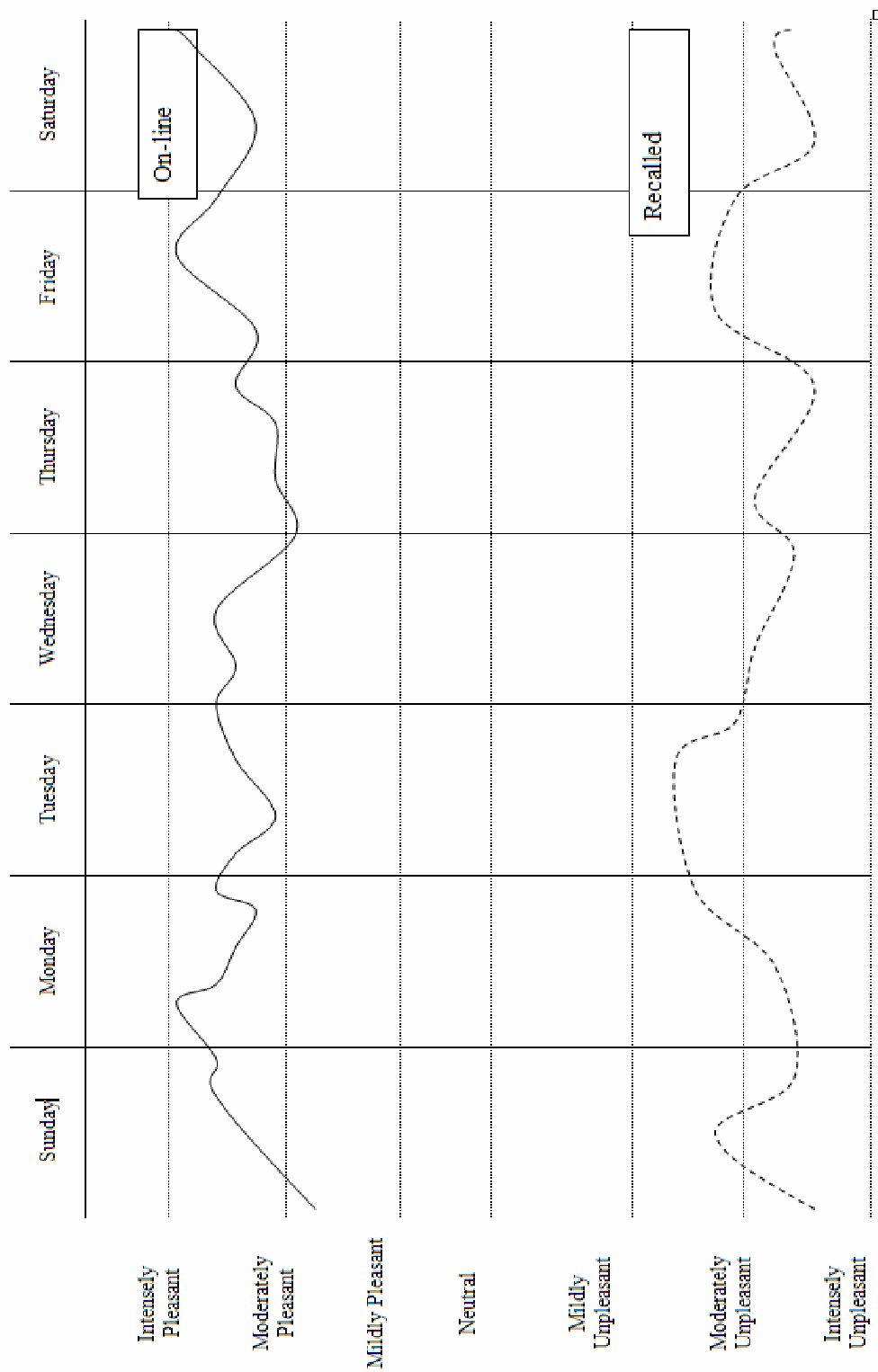
\_\_\_\_\_  
Professor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Class

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail

Appendix D

Graph of participants on-line emotions and recall of emotions from the same experience sampling week.



Appendix E  
Dependent Measures

Please answer the following questions using the scale provided.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
very poor									excellent

\_\_\_\_ Rate this person's overall life satisfaction.

\_\_\_\_ Rate this person's day-to-day moods.

Please answer the following questions using the scale provided below.

1 = not at all

2 = a little

3 = somewhat

4 = very much

5 = extremely much

\_\_\_\_ How much would you like to have this person's life?

\_\_\_\_ How much is this person leading the "good life"?

\_\_\_\_ How good is this person?

\_\_\_\_ How moral is this person?

\_\_\_\_ How happy is this person?

Please rate this person's quality of life on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 = very poor and 10 = excellent. \_\_\_\_

For the next question, please answer using the scale given below the question.

Many religions and philosophies include the idea of a “final judgment.” If there were such a thing as life after death, circle the number that best represents your guess as to what this person would experience.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
most unpleasant									most pleasant
“hell”									“heaven”

How would you rate this person’s mental health on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 = very poor and 10 = excellent? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the scale below, please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Disagree slightly	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree slightly	Agree	Agree strongly
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- \_\_\_ 1. In most ways my life is close to the ideal.
- \_\_\_ 2. The conditions of my life are excellent.
- \_\_\_ 3. I am satisfied with my life.
- \_\_\_ 4. So far I have gotten the things I want in life.
- \_\_\_ 5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.







Appendix H  
Delay of Gratification Scale

Please answer the following questions using the scale provided below.

-3      -2      -1      0      1      2      3  
Never                      Sometimes                      Always

- \_\_\_ 1. Are you good at saving your money because you have had to wait for it and plan for it?
- \_\_\_ 2. Do you enjoy a thing all the more because you had to wait for it and plan for it?
- \_\_\_ 3. Did you tend to save your pocket money as a child?
- \_\_\_ 4. When you are in a supermarket, do you tend to buy a lot of things you hadn't planned to buy?
- \_\_\_ 5. Are you constantly "broke"?
- \_\_\_ 6. Do you agree with the philosophy: "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may all be dead"?
- \_\_\_ 7. Would you describe yourself as often being too impulsive for your own good?
- \_\_\_ 8. Do you fairly often find that it is worthwhile to wait and think things over before deciding?
- \_\_\_ 9. Do you like to spend your money as soon as you get it?
- \_\_\_ 10. Is it hard for you to keep from blowing your top when someone gets you very angry?
- \_\_\_ 11. Can you tolerate being kept waiting for things fairly easily most of the time?
- \_\_\_ 12. Are you good at planning things way in advance?

## Appendix I

## Demographics Questionnaire

**Now we want to know a little bit about YOU.**

Please answer these questions honestly and openly. Remember your answers are confidential and for important research purposes.

Please indicate your sex:      female              male

What is your religion? (Please circle your response)

Protestant (e.g., Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Lutheran, etc.)

Catholic

Jewish

Hinduism

Buddhism

Other \_\_\_\_\_

None

What is your ethnicity? (please circle your response)

Caucasian

Black/African American

Latino/a or Hispanic

Asian/Asian American

Native Indian

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Answer the following questions using the scale provided below.

- 1 = not at all
- 2 = a little
- 3 = somewhat
- 4 = very much
- 5 = extremely much

\_\_\_\_ How important is religion in your life?

\_\_\_\_ How important is spirituality in your life?

\_\_\_\_ How much do your religious beliefs influence your daily decisions?

If applicable, what year are you in school? (Please circle your response)

high school

college first-year

college second-year

college third-year

college fourth-year

college fifth-year or more

graduate student

other (indicate) \_\_\_\_\_

What is your AGE? (write here) \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix J

### Instructions

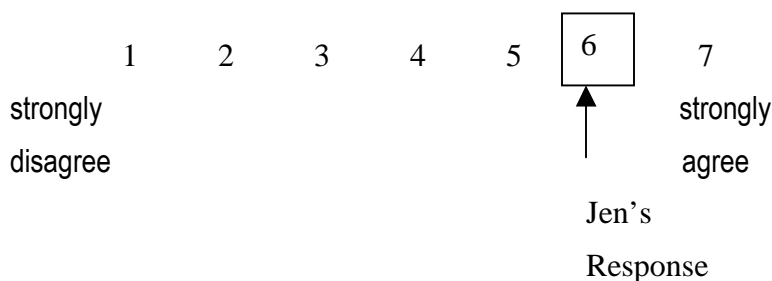
On the next page you will view a summary about Jen. Read the summary carefully and answer the questions on the last page. We want to know what you think of Jen. Please take your time and read carefully.

## Appendix K (High Global, High Moment-to-moment)

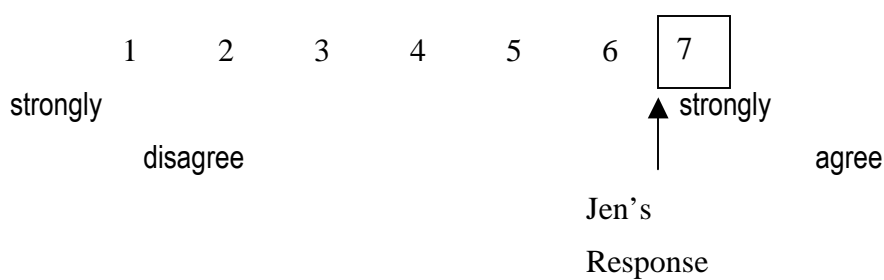
Jen is 30 years old. Although she is not married (and never was) and has no children, Jen dates periodically. She has a good family life and decent job that pays her enough to live comfortably and take vacations from time to time. Jen's family is her brothers and sisters. But she also has some friends. For recreation, Jen most enjoys golf, watching movies, and eating out.

When asked to evaluate her life as a whole, Jen says that she is satisfied with her life. Below are her responses to some questions about her life:

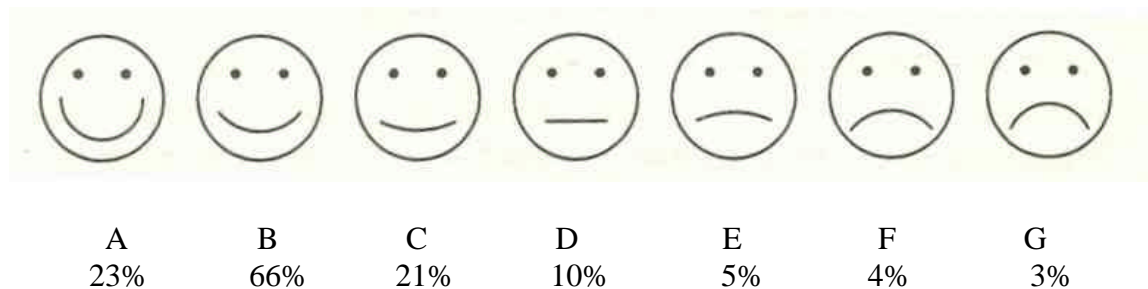
When I examine my life as a whole, I am pleased with how things have turned out.



Overall, I am satisfied with my life.



Recently, Jen participated in a year-long scientific study in which she was required to report how she was feeling several times each day. Jen carried a pager, and scientists paged her many times each day to ask her how she was feeling. Every time she was paged, Jen reported how she was feeling using a faces scale like the one below:



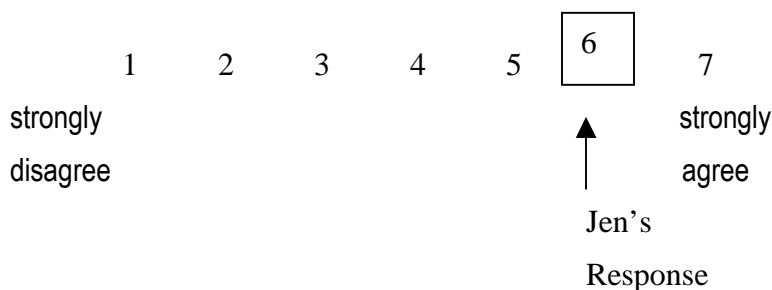
Below each face, we've indicated the percentage of time Jen spent in each of the states. As you can see, she spent the majority of the time in states A, B, and C.

## Appendix K (High Global, Low Moment-to-moment)

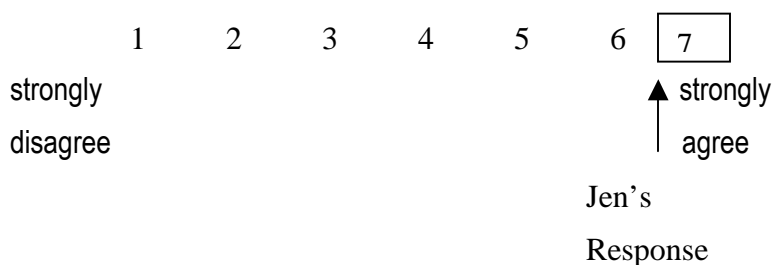
Jen is 30 years old. Although she is not married (and never was) and has no children, Jen dates periodically. She has a good family life and decent job that pays her enough to live comfortably and take vacations from time to time. Jen's family is her brothers and sisters. But she also has some friends. For recreation, Jen mostly enjoys golf, watching movies, and eating out.

When asked to evaluate her life as a whole, Jen says that she is satisfied with her life. Below are her responses to some questions about her life:

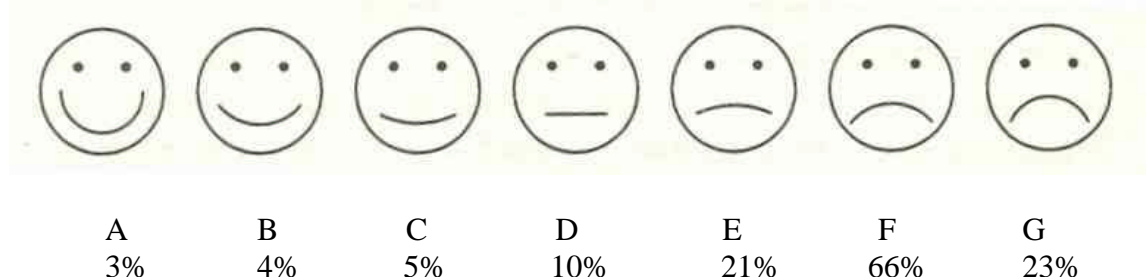
When I examine my life as a whole, I am pleased with how things have turned out.



Overall, I am satisfied with my life.



Recently, Jen participated in a year-long scientific study in which she was required to report how she was feeling several times each day. Jen carried a pager, and scientists paged her many times each day to ask her how she was feeling. Every time she was paged, Jen reported how she was feeling using a faces scale like the one below:



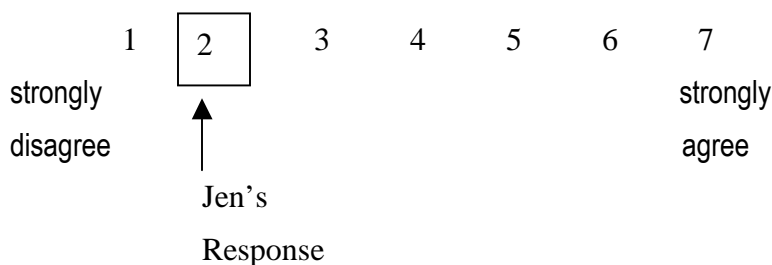
Below each face, we've indicated the percentage of time Jen spent in each of the states. As you can see, she spent the majority of the time in states E, F, and G.

## Appendix K (Low Global, High Moment-to-moment)

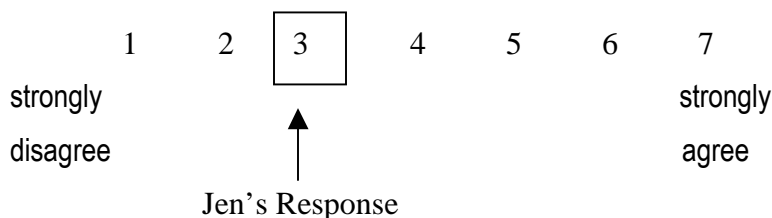
Jen is 30 years old. Although she is not married (and never was) and has no children, Jen dates periodically. She has a good family life and decent job that pays her enough to live comfortably and take vacations from time to time. Jen's family is her brothers and sisters. But she also has some friends. For recreation, Jen mostly enjoys golf, watching movies, and eating out.

When asked to evaluate her life as a whole, Jen says that she is dissatisfied with her life. Below are her responses to some questions about her life:

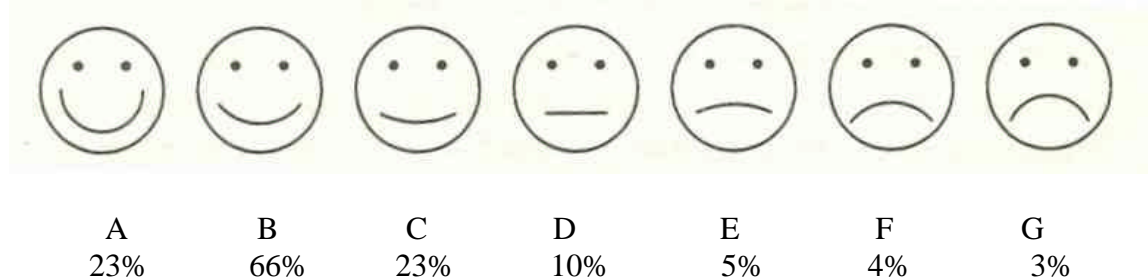
When I examine my life as a whole, I am pleased with how things have turned out.



Overall, I am satisfied with my life.



Recently, Jen participated in a year-long scientific study in which she was required to report how she was feeling several times each day. Jen carried a pager, and scientists paged her many times each day to ask her how she was feeling. Every time she was paged, Jen reported how she was feeling using a faces scale like the one below:



Below each face, we've indicated the percentage of time Jen spent in each of the states. As you can see, she spent the majority of the time in states A, B, and C.

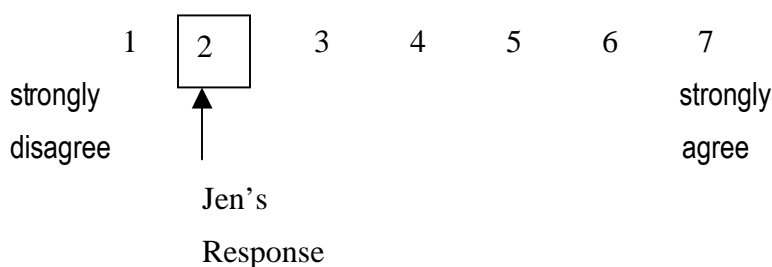


## Appendix K (Low Global, Low Moment-to-moment)

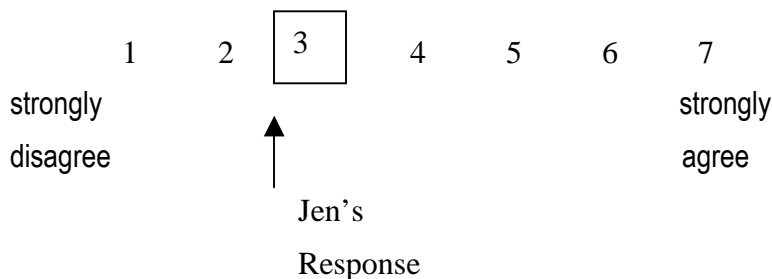
Jen is 30 years old. Although she is not married (and never was) and has no children, Jen dates periodically. She has a good family life and decent job that pays her enough to live comfortably and take vacations from time to time. Jen's family is her brothers and sisters. But she also has some friends. For recreation, Jen mostly enjoys golf, watching movies, and eating out.

When asked to evaluate her life as a whole, Jen says that she is dissatisfied with her life. Below are her responses to some questions about her life:

When I examine my life as a whole, I am pleased with how things have turned out.



Overall, I am satisfied with my life.



Recently, Jen participated in a year-long scientific study in which she was required to report how she was feeling several times each day. Jen carried a pager, and scientists paged her many times each day to ask her how she was feeling. Every time she was paged, Jen reported how she was feeling using a faces scale like the one below:



A	B	C	D	E	F	G
3%	4%	5%	10%	21%	66%	23%

Below each face, we've indicated the percentage of time Jen spent in each of the states. As you can see, she spent the majority of the time in states E, F, and G.

## Appendix L

Please answer the following question. Take your time and be as open and honest as possible.

Why do you think Jen rates her overall life in this way?

## VITA

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Caldwell, A. E. (2005, April). *What you Remember When You Can Not Remember.* Poster session at the Texas Christian University Student Research Symposium, Fort Worth, TX

### **Professional Affiliations**

American Psychological Association

Southwestern Psychological Association

Psi Chi

## ABSTRACT

### MAXIMIZING HAPPINESS: MOMENTARY, GLOBAL, AND RETROSPECTIVE INDICATORS OF THE “GOOD LIFE”

by Amanda Elaine Caldwell, M.S., 2006  
Department of Psychology  
Texas Christian University

Thesis Advisor: Christie Napa Scollon, Professor of Psychology

Research examining folk theories of the “good life” has focused on global evaluations of happiness such as life satisfaction (Diener, Wirtz, & Oishi, 2001), or have confounded moment-to-moment happiness with global happiness (King & Napa, 1998). There is, however, an abundance of evidence that moment-to-moment emotions and global or retrospective ratings of SWB can differ (Kahneman, 1999). The present research examined the relative influence of moment-to-moment emotion vs. global or retrospective happiness (RH) in folk concepts of the “good life”. Study 1 compared moment-to-moment happiness to retrospective reports, while Study 2 compared moment-to-moment happiness to global life satisfaction (GLS). Both studies revealed significant effects of moment-to-moment happiness, GLS, and retrospective happiness on measures of desirability and moral goodness. Similarly, individuals high in moment-to-moment happiness, GLS, and RH were judged as likely to go to heaven. Results suggest that moment-to-moment, global, and RH are essential to conceptions of the “good life”.